

## APPENDIX I

## Origin and Meaning of the Names of the Counties of California With County Seats and Dates Counties Were Created <sup>1</sup>

**ALAMEDA COUNTY.** County seat, Oakland. Created March 25, 1853. The word Alameda is derived from *alamo*, the Spanish name for cottonwood or poplar tree, and means a "grove of poplar trees." The name was applied both to the southern portion of the county (*La Alameda*), and to the stream running through it (*Rio de la Alameda*) as early as 1795.

**ALPINE COUNTY.** County seat, Markleeville. Created March 16, 1864. This county derived its name from the English word *Alpine*, meaning "of, pertaining to, or connected with, the Alps." Its geographical position, lying as it does on the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, makes it particularly an alpine county, and hence its name.

**AMADOR COUNTY.** County seat, Jackson. Created May 11, 1854. The county is named for José María Amador, soldier, rancher, and miner, who was born in San Francisco on December 18, 1794, the son of Sergeant Pedro Amador, a Spanish soldier who settled in California in 1771. In 1848, José María Amador, with several Native Americans, established a successful gold mining camp near the present town of Amador. In Spanish, the word *amador* means "lover of inanimate objects."

**BUTTE COUNTY.** County seat, Oroville. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties of the State of California. Its name is derived from the Marysville or Sutter Buttes, which lay within the boundaries of the county when it was created. The word *butte* is derived from the Teutonic word meaning "a blunt extension or elevation." In the French language, it signifies "a small hill or mound of earth detached from any mountain range."

**CALAVERAS COUNTY.** County seat, San Andreas. Created February 18, 1850. Also one of the original 27 counties of California. The meaning of the word *Calaveras* is "skulls." This county "takes its name from the Calaveras River, which was reportedly so designated by an early explorer, when he found, on the banks of the stream, many skulls of Indians who had either died of famine or had been killed in tribal conflicts over hunting and fishing grounds."

<sup>1</sup> The following sources were used in the preparation of the section relating to the origin and meaning of the names of California counties: *The Names of the Counties of California* by Erwin G. Guddé; *Origin and Meaning of the Names of the Counties of California* by Prentiss Maslin; *Economic Survey of California and Its Counties* by the Research Department of the California State Chamber of Commerce; *Report of General Mariano G. Vallejo to the First Legislative Session*, April 16, 1850; *Historical Background of Los Angeles County* by J. F. Moroney; *California Blue Books* for 1946, 1950, 1958; *Statutes of 1850*, Chapters 15, 61.

**COLUSA COUNTY.** County seat, Colusa. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties of the state. Named after two Mexican land grants: *Coluses* (1844) and *Colus* (1845). The name of this county in the original act of 1850 was spelled *Colusi*, and oftentimes in newspapers was spelled *Coluse*. The word is derived from the name of a Native American tribe living on the west side of the Sacramento River.

**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY.** County seat, Martinez. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties of the state. This name signifies "opposite coast," and the county is so called from its situation opposite San Francisco, in an easterly direction, on San Francisco Bay. In 1853, Alameda County was formed from territory originally included in this county.

**DEL NORTE COUNTY.** County seat, Crescent City. Created March 2, 1857, from territory formerly included in Klamath County. The name of this county signifies "the north," and the county being situated in the extreme northwest corner of the state, derived its name from its geographical position.

**EL DORADO COUNTY.** County seat, Placerville. Created February 18, 1850. Also one of the original 27 counties of the state. "*El Dorado*—the far-famed fabulous region of genial clime and never-fading verdure, where gold and precious stones are as common as rocks and pebbles, where wines gently flow from fountains, where wheat spontaneously grows overtopped with tiny loaves of bread, and pigeons fly about already roasted. . . . Francis Orellana, a companion of Pizarro, first spread the account of the supposed existence of this province in South America.

"The name, meaning 'the gilded one,' appears at the beginning of the Sixteenth Century as that of a mythical Indian chief . . . who was said to have been covered with gold dust during the performance of religious rites. This chief was eagerly sought by the Spanish and German conquerors of northern South America until his abode was assertedly found in 1537."

When the discovery of gold by James W. Marshall at Coloma in January, 1848, became known to the world, California, and particularly that section where gold was discovered, was called "*El Dorado*." From this fact the county received its name.

**FRESNO COUNTY.** County seat, Fresno. Created April 19, 1856. Named after Fresno Creek. *Fresno* in Spanish signifies "ash tree," and it was because of the abundance of mountain ash in Fresno County's mountains that the county received its name.

**GLENN COUNTY.** County seat, Willows. Created March 11, 1891. This county was created out of the northern portion of Colusa County, and was named for Dr. Hugh J. Glenn, who, during his lifetime, was the largest wheat farmer in the state, and a man of great prominence in political and commercial life in California.

**HUMBOLDT COUNTY.** County seat, Eureka. Created May 12, 1853. This county derived its name from Humboldt Bay. Humboldt Bay was entered by a sea otter party in 1806, but was not rediscovered until 1849. In 1850, Douglas Ottinger and Hans Buhne entered the bay, naming it *Humboldt* in honor of the great naturalist and world explorer, Baron Alexander von Humboldt.

**IMPERIAL COUNTY.** County seat, El Centro. Created August 15, 1907. It derived its name from the Imperial Valley, situated therein, and is the "youngest" of California's counties. The valley had been named for the Imperial Land Company, a subsidiary of the California Development Company, which, at the turn of the century, had reclaimed the south portion of the Colorado desert for agriculture.

**INYO COUNTY.** County seat, Independence. Created March 22, 1866. This county derived its name from the Native American name for the mountains in its area. The meaning of the word *Inyo* is "dwelling place of a great spirit."

**KERN COUNTY.** County seat, Bakersfield. Created April 2, 1866. This county derived its name from the Kern River, which was named for Edward Kern, topographer of General John C. Frémont's 1845 expedition.

**KINGS COUNTY.** County seat, Hanford. Created March 22, 1893. This county was created out of a part of Tulare County in 1893. Some 100 square miles of territory from Fresno County was added to the county in 1908. It derived its name from the Kings River, which, according to Padre Muñoz' diary of the Morago Expedition of 1806, was discovered in 1805 by an exploring expedition and named *Río de los Santos Reyes* (River of the Holy Kings).

**LAKE COUNTY.** County seat, Lakeport. Created May 20, 1861, from territory formerly included in Napa County. This county derived its name because of the many charming lakes that are within its boundaries.

**LASSEN COUNTY.** County seat, Susanville. Created April 1, 1864. The name of this county was derived from Mount Lassen, which was named for Peter Lassen, one of General Frémont's guides and a famous trapper and frontiersman, who was killed by the Paiutes at the base of the mountain in 1859.

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY.** County seat, Los Angeles. Created February 18, 1850. This county was one of the original 27 counties of the state, and, when created in 1850, "occupied a comparatively small area along the coast line between Santa Barbara and San Diego with Mariposa County forming its northern boundary. . . . In the following year, however, the Legislature revised the boundaries of these counties. Mariposa and San Diego Counties, which had originally been the two largest in the State, were considerably reduced, and Los Angeles County was greatly enlarged

forming a broad, sprawling empire of some 35,000 square miles, extending from San Diego to Santa Barbara and from the Pacific Ocean to the Colorado River and the eastern boundary of the State." There have been three major changes in the boundaries of Los Angeles County: in 1853, 1866, and 1889, leaving the county with a total area of 4,083.21 square miles.

The words *Los Angeles* literally means "the angels," and are a contraction of the original name *Pueblo del Río de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles de Porciúncula* (The Town of the River of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels). In 1781, Governor Felipe de Neve issued orders for the establishment of this pueblo on El Río Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles. The pueblo in time became known as the *Ciudad de Los Angeles* or the "City of the Angels," and it is from this contraction that the present name is derived.

**MADERA COUNTY.** County seat, Madera. Created March 11, 1893, from a portion of Fresno County lying north of the San Joaquin River. *Madera* in Spanish signifies "timber." The county derived its name from the Town of Madera, so named when the California Lumber Company built a flume to carry lumber to the railroad there in 1876.

**MARIN COUNTY.** County seat, San Rafael. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties of the state. The origin of its name is not clear. One version is that the county was named for Chief Marin, of the Licatiut tribe of Native Americans who inhabited that section and waged fierce battle against the early Spanish military explorers. Chief Marin afterwards was Christianized and baptized under the name of *Marinero*, "The Mariner," because of his intimate knowledge of the Bay of San Francisco, where he often served as ferryman for the whites. The other version is that the bay between San Pedro and San Quentin points was named *Bahía de Nuestra Señora del Rosario la Marinera* by Ayala in 1775, and it is quite possible that *Marin* is simply an abbreviation of this name.

**MARIPOSA COUNTY.** County seat, Mariposa. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties. This county took its name from Mariposa Creek. The meaning of *Mariposa* in Spanish is "butterfly" or "moth." Gudde states that the name for the stream originated September 27, 1806, when the Moraga Expedition camped there, and called the place "of the Mariposas" because of the great number of butterflies and moths. Maslin gives two versions, one of which is that the first explorers in the mountains of that region beheld for the first time a beautiful lily growing everywhere, gay-colored, spotted, and in some respects resembling the wings of a butterfly. In their admiration, they gave to this dainty flower the name of *Mariposa* (butterfly) lily.

MENDOCINO COUNTY. County seat, Ukiah. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties of the State of California. This county derived its name from Cape Mendocino, which was probably named in honor of either Antonio de Mendoza, Viceroy of New Spain, 1535–1542 (who sent the Juan Cabrillo Expedition to this coast in 1542), or Lorenzo Suárez de Mendoza, Viceroy from 1580 to 1583. "Mendocino is an adjective form of the family name of Mendoza, which was rarely used as a geographical term. Hence the name might have been chosen without reference to either of the two viceroys."

MERCED COUNTY. County seat, Merced. Created April 19, 1855, from a part of Mariposa County. The county derived its name from the Merced River, or *El Río de Nuestra Señora de la Merced* (River of Our Lady of Mercy), so named by an expedition headed by Gabriel Moraga when they came upon it on September 29, 1806, at the end of a hot dusty ride.

MODOC COUNTY. County seat, Alturas. Created February 17, 1874, from the easterly section of Siskiyou County. This county derived its name from a tribe of Native Americans who lived at the headwaters of the Pit River. Maslin suggests that the word *Modoc* means "the head of the river." Gudde states that the word is derived from the Klamath word *Moatokni*, meaning "southerners," i.e., the people living south of the Klamath tribe.

MONO COUNTY. County seat, Bridgeport. Created April 24, 1861. The county is named after Mono Lake, which, in 1852, was named for a Native American tribe which inhabited the Sierra Nevada from north of Mono Lake to Owens Lake. Their western neighbors, the *Yokuts*, called them *monachie*, meaning "fly people" because the pupae of a fly (*Ephydra hyans*) was their chief food staple and trading article.

MONTEREY COUNTY. County seat, Salinas. Created February 18, 1850. This county is one of the original 27 counties of the State of California. It derived its name from the Bay of Monterey. The word itself is composed of the Spanish words *monte* and *rey*, and literally means "king of the forest." The bay was named by Sebastián Vizcaino on December 16, 1602, in honor of the Conde de Monterey, then Viceroy of New Spain.

NAPA COUNTY. County seat, Napa. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties of the State of California. Named after Napa Valley. The word *Napa* is of Native American derivation, and has been variously translated as "grizzly bear," "house," "motherland," or "fish." "Of the many explanations of the origin of the name, the most plausible seems to be that it is derived from the Patwin word *napo* meaning 'house.' "

NEVADA COUNTY. County seat, Nevada City. Created April 25, 1851. Named after the mining town of Nevada City, which had been named from the second element of the term "Sierra Nevada." The word *Nevada* in Spanish means "snowy" or "snowcovered."

ORANGE COUNTY. County seat, Santa Ana. Created March 11, 1889. This county was given the name of "Orange" because of its extensive orange groves for which it is justly famous.

PLACER COUNTY. County seat, Auburn. Created April 25, 1851. *Placer* is probably a contraction of the words *plaza de oro*, the place of gold, and means in Spanish "a place near a river where gold is found." The county derived its name from the numerous places therein where the method of extracting the gold from the earth, called placer mining, was practiced.

PLUMAS COUNTY. County seat, Quincy. Created March 18, 1854. The Spanish originally called one of the tributaries of the Sacramento River *El Río de las Plumas*, or the "River of the Feathers." The Legislature, in creating this county, gave it the name of *Plumas*, because of the fact that all of the numerous branches of the Feather River have their origin in its mountains.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY. County seat, Riverside. Created March 11, 1893. This county was created from portions of San Diego and San Bernardino Counties, and derived its name from the City of Riverside, so christened when the upper canal of the Santa Ana River reached it in 1871.

SACRAMENTO COUNTY. County seat, Sacramento. Created February 18, 1850. This county is one of the original 27 counties of the State of California and was named after the Sacramento River. The word *Sacramento* signifies "Sacrament" or "Lord's Supper." "The streams known as Feather and Sacramento Rivers were first respectively named by Captain Moraga 'Sacramento' and 'Jesus Maria'; but the latter now assumes the name of Sacramento, whilst the former is called Feather."

SAN BENITO COUNTY. County seat, Hollister. Created February 12, 1874. Named after San Benito Valley. Crespi, in his expedition in 1772, named a small river in honor of *San Benedicto* (Saint Benedict), the patron saint of the married, and it is from the contraction of this name that the county took its name.

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY. County seat, San Bernardino. Created April 26, 1853. Saint Bernard is the patron saint of mountain passes. The name *Bernardino* means "bold as a bear." The Spanish gave to the snow-capped peak in southern California the name of *San Bernardino* in honor of the saint, and from this the county derived its name. Gudde states that the county was named after the City of San Bernardino which was founded as a Mormon colony in 1850, and that the name was first applied by Padre Dumetz to a temporary chapel on May 20, 1810.

**SAN DIEGO COUNTY.** County seat, San Diego. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties of the State of California. Named after San Diego Bay, which had been rechristened by Vizcaino on November 12, 1602, in honor of the Franciscan, San Diego de Alcalá de Henares, whose name was borne by his flagship. The Bay of San Diego was first discovered in 1542 by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo who named it San Miguel.

**SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY.** County seat, San Francisco. Created February 18, 1850. This county is one of the original 27 counties of the State of California. The sixth mission in California was established here by Padre Junipero Serra on October 9, 1776, and was named *Misión San Francisco de Asís a la Laguna de los Dolores* (Saint Francis of Assisi at the Lagoon of Sorrows). The mission is now known as "Mission Dolores." The name *San Francisco* appears on maps since 1590, but it was not identified with this bay until a detachment of the Portolá Expedition discovered it in 1769. Establishment of the presidio and mission in 1776 definitely fixed the name on the peninsula.

**SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY.** County seat, Stockton. Created February 18, 1850. This is one of the original 27 counties of the State of California, and takes its name from the San Joaquin River. In the early 1800's, Lieutenant Moraga, commanding an expedition in the lower great Central Valley of California, gave to a small rivulet, which springs from the Sierra Nevada Mountains and empties into Buena Vista Lake, the name of *San Joaquin* (meaning Saint Joachim) and it is from this that the present river derived its name.

**SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY.** County seat, San Luis Obispo. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties of the State of California. On September 1, 1772, the Mission San Luis Obispo was established here by Padre Junipero Serra, and named for Saint Louis, the Bishop of Toulouse. The county derived its name from the mission.

**SAN MATEO COUNTY.** County seat, Redwood City. Created April 19, 1856, from territory originally a part of San Francisco County. The county was reorganized and enlarged in 1868 by adding territory from Santa Cruz County. This county bears the Spanish name for Saint Matthew. As a place name, *St. Matthew* appears as early as 1776 in Anza's diary; and the arroyo, the point, and the settlement at the unofficial San Mateo Mission are all so designated on the early maps. Until about 1850, the name appeared as *San Matheo*.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY. County seat, Santa Barbara. Created February 18, 1850. This is another of the original 27 counties of the state. The Santa Barbara channel received its name from Sebastián Vizcaino, when he sailed over the channel waters on December 4, 1602. In 1782, Father Junipero Serra dedicated a site near the channel for a presidio, and on December 4, 1786, he founded the nearby Mission Santa Barbara (Saint Barbara). The county derives its name from the mission.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY. County seat, San Jose. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties of the State of California. The county is named after Mission Santa Clara, which was established on January 18, 1777, and named for Saint Clara of Assisi, Italy. The name *Clara* means "clear" or "bright."

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY. County seat, Santa Cruz. Created February 18, 1850, one of the original 27 counties of the state. In the original act passed February 18, 1850, the county was given the name of *Branciforte* after the Spanish pueblo founded there in 1797. However, less than two months later, on April 5, 1850, the name was changed to *Santa Cruz*. The Santa Cruz Mission, established in 1791, and completed in 1794, was destroyed by earthquake in 1857, but a smaller-scaled replica was erected in 1931. *Santa* is the Spanish feminine of "saint" or "holy"; *Cruz* is the Spanish for "cross," and *Santa Cruz* signifies "holy cross."

SHASTA COUNTY. County seat, Redding. Created February 18, 1850. This county is another of the original 27, and was named after Mount Shasta. The name *Shasta* is derived from the English equivalent for the name of a Native American tribe that once lived in the area. The name of this tribe was spelled in various ways until the present version was used when the county was established.

SIERRA COUNTY. County seat, Downieville. Created April 16, 1852. *Sierra* is the Spanish word for "saw," and *Sierra Nevada* or "snow saw" was applied to the Sierra Nevada chain of mountains because of the jagged, serrated or saw-tooth peaks which form their skyline. The county was so called because of these jagged peaks within its borders. Gudde states that *Sierra* means "mountain range"; and that, in Spanish times, any two or more peaks in a row formed a *sierra*.

SISKIYOU COUNTY. County seat, Yreka. Created March 22, 1852, and named after the mountain range. The origin of the word *Siskiyou* is not known. One version is that it is the Chinook word for "bobtailed horse," such an animal belonging to a Hudson's Bay Company trapper having been lost in these mountains in 1828. Another version, given in an argument delivered by Senator Jacob R. Snyder of San Francisco before the State



Senate on April 14, 1852, is that the French name *Six Callieux*, meaning "six-stone," was given to a ford on the Umpqua River by Michel La Frambeau and a party of Hudson's Bay Company trappers in 1832 because six large stones or rocks lay in the river where they crossed. Gudde suggests that the Canadian French word *six-cailloux* was used in this version.

**SOLANO COUNTY.** County seat, Fairfield. Created February 18, 1850. One of the original 27 counties of the state. The county derives its name indirectly from that of the Franciscan missionary, Father Francisco Solano, whose name was given in baptism to the chief of one of the important Native American tribes of the region when he accepted Christianity. At the request of General Mariano Vallejo, the county was named for Chief Solano, who at one time ruled over most of the land and tribes between the Petaluma Creek and the Sacramento River. Before receiving the name of *Solano*, this chief was called *Sem-yeto*, which signifies "brave or fierce hand." In 1934, a bronze statue of Chief Solano was erected in Fairfield.

**SONOMA COUNTY.** County seat, Santa Rosa. Created February 18, 1850. This county is also one of the original 27 counties of the state. *Sonoma* is a Native American name, translated by some as "Valley of the Moon," and by others as "land or tribe of Chief Nose." It is also the name of a Native American tribe once occupying the area.

**STANISLAUS COUNTY.** County seat, Modesto. Created April 1, 1854. The word *Stanislaus* is a corruption of *Estanislao*, the baptismal name of a mission-educated Native American chief who led a band of Native Americans in a series of battles against Mexican troops. He was finally defeated by General Mariano G. Vallejo in 1826. The county is named for the Stanislaus River, first discovered by Gabriel Moraga in 1806, and christened *Rio de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. The river was later renamed *Rio Estanislao* for the Native American chief.

**SUTTER COUNTY.** County seat, Yuba City. Created February 18, 1850. This is one of the original 27 counties of the State of California. Sutter County was named after General John Augustus Sutter, a native of Switzerland, who obtained a large grant from the Mexican government, and called his first settlement New Helvetia, now the City of Sacramento. In 1841, the general established a great stock ranch in this area, to which he retired in 1850 when gold seekers deprived him of most of his holdings at Sacramento.

**TEHAMA COUNTY.** County seat, Red Bluff. Created April 9, 1856. The county is named for the City of Tehama, which, until 1857, was the county seat. Gudde states that it is not certain whether or not the name is of Native American origin, although a tribe of Native Americans by this name is mentioned in reports of the early 1850's. Suggested possible roots are the Arabic word *tehama*, "hot lowlands" or the Mexican word *tejamanil*, "shingle."

**TRINITY COUNTY.** County seat, Weaverville. Created February 18, 1850. This is one of the original 27 counties of the State of California. It takes its name from the Trinity River, first so called in 1845 by Major Pearson B. Reading who was under the mistaken impression that the stream emptied into Trinidad Bay. Trinity is the English version of Trinidad.

**TULARE COUNTY.** County seat, Visalia. Created April 20, 1852. Commandant Fages, while hunting for deserters in 1772, discovered a great lake surrounded by marshes and filled with rushes, which he named *Los Tules*, "the tules." It is from this lake that the county derives its name. "The root of the name [Tulare] is found in the Mexican word *tullin*, designating cattail or similar reeds." The geographical term *Los Tulares* was used as early as 1776.

**TUOLUMNE COUNTY.** County seat, Sonora. Created February 18, 1850. This county is one of the original 27 counties. "The name *Tuolumne* is of Indian origin and has been given different meanings, such as 'Many Stone Houses,' 'The Land of Mountain Lions,' and 'Straight Up Steep,' the latter an interpretation of William Fuller, a native Indian chief." Vallejo, in his Report to the First Legislature in 1850, said that the word is "a corruption of the Indian word *talmalamne*, which signifies 'cluster of stone wigwams.'" Gudde states that the county is named after the river, which, in turn, was named for a Native American tribe "mentioned as *Taulamne* in 1806, and as *Taulames* in 1810. The name may mean 'people who dwell in stone houses,' i.e., in caves. The suffix *umne* means 'people'."

**VENTURA COUNTY.** County seat, Ventura. Created March 22, 1872. On March 31, 1782, the Mission San Buenaventura was founded at San Buenaventura (now known as Ventura). *Buenaventura* is composed of two Spanish words, *buena*, meaning "good," and *ventura*, meaning "fortune"; hence the name signifies "good fortune." The county derives its name from the latter word, *Ventura*.

**YOLO COUNTY.** County seat, Woodland. Created February 18, 1850. This is one of the original 27 counties of the State of California, and in the original act of 1850, the name was spelled "Yola." *Yolo* is a Native American name variously believed to be a corruption of a Native American tribal name *Yo-loi*, meaning "a place abounding in rushes," or of the name of a Native American chief, *Yodoi*, or of the Native American village of *Yodoi*.

**YUBA COUNTY.** County seat, Marysville. Created February 18, 1850. This is another of the original 27 counties of the state, and was named after the Yuba River, so named by Captain John A. Sutter for the Native American village *Yubu*, *Yupu*, or *Jubu*, near the confluence of the Yuba and Feather Rivers. Vallejo, in his Report to the First Legislature in 1850, stated that the river was named *Uba* by an exploring expedition in 1834, because of the quantities of wild grapes (*uvas silvestres* in Spanish) which they found growing upon its banks.